

# northwest iowa & northcentral

By Thomas Gengerke, Regional Fisheries Supervisor

## walleye

Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo** – Harvest was down in 2005, but should recover some in 2006. A fall electrofishing survey showed good numbers of 14- to 16-inch fish.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – 2005 survey revealed excellent numbers of 1-pound fish, with walleye up to 10 pounds collected.

Des Moines River, **Kossuth & Humboldt** – Both the East and West Forks have produced good catches in the spring and fall in recent years.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of 13- to 18-inch fish will be creel. Excellent opportunities exist to catch a trophy-sized fish. Try crank baits in July.

Five Island Lake, **Palo Alto** – Smaller fish will enter the creel in 2006. Good walleye growth will sustain the fishery.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of 14-inch and larger fish

avail-  
abl. In  
the spring,  
fish after  
dark.  
Later in  
the season  
fish a jig and a minnow through  
the weeds or cast and retrieve a  
nightcrawler.

Storm Lake, **Buena Vista** – Good population. Males average 19 inches while females average 20.7 inches in the spring. Troll crank-

baits or verti-  
cally jig along the new dredge cuts.  
Don't forget that there is a 15-inch  
length limit with only one fish over  
22 inches allowed per day.

## yellow perch

Rice Lake, **Winnebago** – Good fall and winter fishery.

Silver Lake, **Worth** – Dense population, sorting required, fish up to 10 inches collected in 2005 survey.

Lake Cornelia, **Wright** – Nice size fish (10-inch-plus), but don't expect many limits.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Yellow perch anglers will see an upswing to the fishery, as good numbers of fish will be available during the 2006 season. Yellow perch 9 to 10.5 inches will be common in the catch and will sustain the fishery for the fall.

## bullheads

North Twin Lake, **Calhoun** – Huge numbers of quality bullheads. Lot's of fish over a pound in last year's survey.

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Bullheads and lot's of them sum up the fishing potential. Most fish are between 7.5 and 8.5 inches.



Dog Creek Lake, **O'Brien** – This small lake again has the potential to provide anglers quality fishing during 2006. Fish the north and west ends of the lake early in the season.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – You can “fill the bucket” at Silver Lake with good numbers of large fish.

Center Lake, **Dickinson** – Fewer bullheads will be caught in 2006; however, anglers will continue to harvest fish approaching 12 inches.

Crystal Lake, **Hancock** – High density of three-quarter-pound fish.

Rice Lake, **Winnebago** – Springtime, shortly after ice-out will produce good results.

### channel catfish

Scharnberg Pond, **Clay** – Good numbers of “nice” size channel catfish are available from this county area. Traditional baits are in order; however, don’t overlook live bait such as nightcrawlers.

Silver Lake, **Dickinson** – Virtually untapped fishery. Try fishing at night with live bait such as chubs or crawlers and a bonus walleye may be added to the stringer.

Ingham Lake, **Emmet** – Excellent angling during 2006. Restocked in 2001, these fish have had excellent growth with good numbers of fish 15 to 17 inches available.

Storm Lake, **Buena Vista** – Try fishing a bobber and live bait around the islands in May and June

and drifting a leech or crawler in the summer months. Lot’s of fish!

Brown’s Lake, **Woodbury** – Catfish in the 1- to 5-pound range and in excellent body condition abound in this oxbow lake of western Iowa.

Boone River, **Hamilton** – Scenic river with lot’s of fish between one-half and 2 pounds.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – 2005 survey showed good numbers of fish in the 3 to 5 pound range.

Lake Cornelia, **Wright** – High density of fish that are underutilized.

Crystal Lake, **Hancock** – 2005 netting survey revealed an abundant population of 1- to 2-pound catfish.

### bluegills

Upper Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Dense population, with many over 7 inches.

Eldred Sherwood, **Hancock** – Lot’s of nice fish caught on the weed line in 2005.

Brushy Creek, **Webster** – Huge year class of 8- to 9-inch bluegills. 2006 should be a banner year. In May and June fish the north end.

North Twin, **Calhoun** – Lot’s of big ‘gills in this lake. Fish in the shade of the docks during the summer and fall with a little leadhead.

Yellow Smoke Lake, **Crawford** – Drift fishing a small leadhead tipped with a waxworm is a great way to catch the 8- 10-inch bluegills in Yellow Smoke.

Dog Creek Lake, **O'Brien** – Fish the submerged shallow water timber during the spring. Growth throughout the summer will provide an upswing to the fishery from now through the 2007 season.

Lake Pahoja, **Lyon** – Quality (6 to 8 inches) size fish dominate the catch.

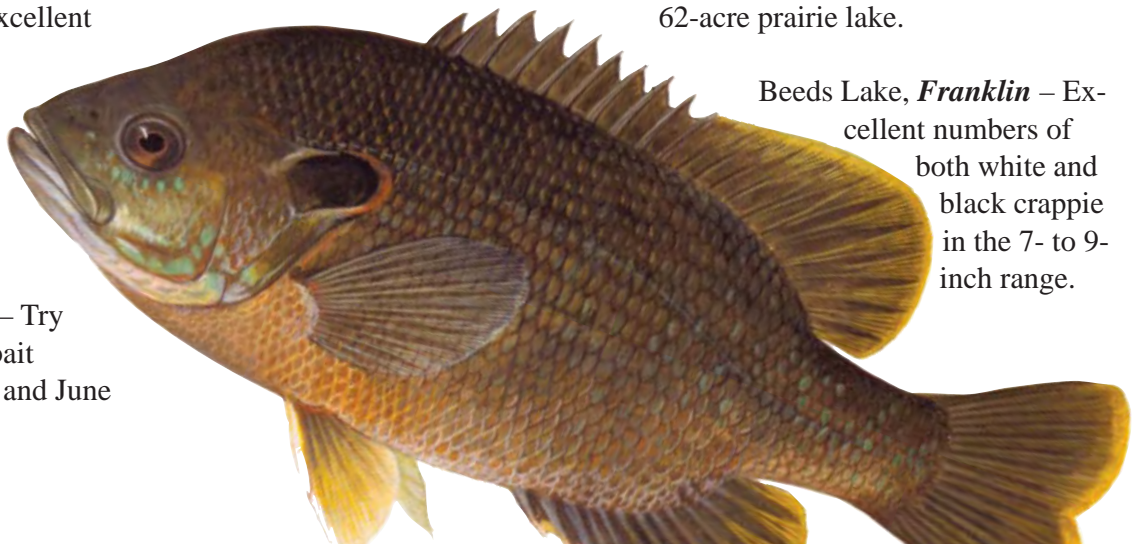
Center Lake, **Dickinson** – Fish near the overhanging and submerged brush. Density on the upswing.

### crappie

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Fall fishing is just as good as spring so anglers have two prime times to catch a mess of nice crappie. Fish average 8 to 10 inches but 14-inch fish are available.

Crawford Creek Lake, **Ida** – Drift fishing using a small leadhead tipped with live bait is very effective in locating and catching crappie in this 62-acre prairie lake.

Beeds Lake, **Franklin** – Excellent numbers of both white and black crappie in the 7- to 9-inch range.





Briggs Woods Lake, **Hamilton** – Eight- to 9-inch crappies provide year round angling.

Lower Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Fish downed trees along shoreline in spring and drift fish in open water during the summer.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – 2005 was the best in years. Fish the north end shore, Hales and Templar Lagoon in the spring.

### largemouth bass

Brushy Creek Lake, **Webster** – One of the state's hottest bass lakes. Good water quality plus habit equals good bass numbers.

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Anglers will experience excellent catches of fish greater than 15 inches; however, anglers are strongly urged to practice catch-and-release of this predator species.

Upper Pine Lake, **Hardin** – Good size structure, with many fish greater than 3 pounds.

Smith Lake, **Kossuth** – High density of football-size bass observed in 2005 survey.

### smallmouth bass

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Fine population of “smallies.” Action begins shortly after ice-out around shallow rock piles on sunny, calm days using jigs and minnows. As the water warms the fish disperse to deeper rock piles and emerging weeds and can be caught with live bait and artificials.

West Okoboji, **Dickinson** – Consistent producer. Fish are 15 inches and larger. Rocks are the key early with rocks, weeds and weed lines productive in the summer. Leeches are a good summer bait.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – Forty percent of the fish collected in 2005 survey were 12 inches or greater.

Boone River, **Hamilton** – Fish over 18 inches collected in most recent survey.

### northern pike

Spirit Lake, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of angler-acceptable

size fish and larger will be common to the Spirit Lake angler. An indicator of this increased pike population is the steadily increasing net catches of this species during walleye brood stock netting operations.

West Okoboji, **Dickinson** – Good numbers of large fish are caught every winter. During the open water season fish early and late in the season for the best results and use large baits such as chubs or large artificial baits.

Winnebago River, **Winnebago, Hancock, Worth, Cerro Gordo** – Stocked with fingerlings annually. Produces nice fish both spring and fall.

Iowa River, **Hardin** – Three- to 6-pound fish observed in survey between Alden and Iowa Falls.

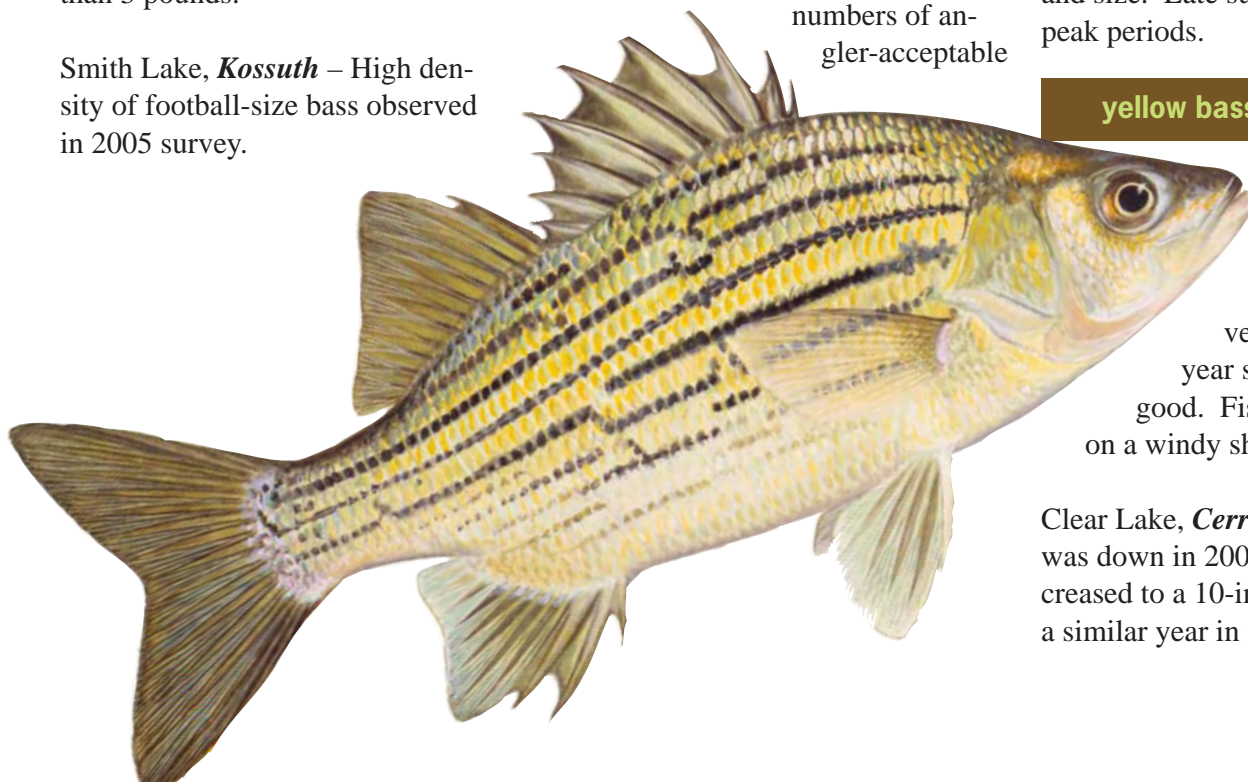
### muskellunge

Muskie populations in Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo**, Spirit and West Okoboji, **Dickinson**, and Brushy Creek, **Webster** have matured in numbers and size. Late summer and fall are peak periods.

### yellow bass

Black Hawk Lake, **Sac** – Thousands of yellow bass harvested in 2005. This year should be just as good. Fish a small leadhead on a windy shoreline.

Clear Lake, **Cerro Gordo** – Harvest was down in 2005; however, size increased to a 10-inch average. Expect a similar year in 2006.



# hiddenjewel

2006

## northeast

By Bill Kalishek, biologist  
The Cedar River in Mitchell County, from the town of Mitchell downstream, offers excellent angling for native populations of smallmouth bass and channel catfish. Annual stockings of fingerling walleye and northern pike also provide great fishing. It's best to float the river in a canoe or walk the Cedar River Greenbelt Trail from highway 9 to Mitchell or the Spring Park Trails. Interstate Park at Mitchell (modern facilities) and Spring Park near Osage (primitive camping) provide riverside accommodations.

## northwest

By Jim Christianson, biologist  
Lake Pahoja, Lyon County, is a 70-acre man-made lake that provides hours of recreation for the outdoor enthusiast. The fishing clientele is rather localized, probably due to its location in extreme northwestern Iowa. With recent fish management activities, the bluegill and crappie fisheries should expand and provide some good angling. This, along with some very good channel catfish fishing, will make this lake an angler's destination. The park area

adjacent to the lake is managed by the Lyon County Conservation Board and provides many amenities, including camping pads, cabins, trails, a beach, playgrounds, boat rentals and a covered fishing pier.

## southeast

By Don Kline, biologist  
Yenrougis Pond lays just 2 miles north of Sigourney. The rugged landscape of the abandoned rock quarry compliments the crystal clear water. Anglers will find healthy populations of bluegills, black crappies, largemouth bass, channel catfish and redear sunfish. Expect to catch a bunch of nice size fish of all species. Just vary your tackle and bait to fit the species of fish. Try a small hook and pinch of worm for panfish, flashy spinner baits for bass and smelly stink baits for catfish. Dabble along the shoreline or work the deeper water in a canoe or float tube. A gravel ramp is available for small boats with electric motors. Bring a picnic



Nine Eagles Lake

or plan a primitive camp out in this quiet scenic area.

## southwest

By Gary Sobotka, biologist  
Nine Eagles Lake is a 56-acre lake hidden in Decatur County near Davis City. The lake has good populations of bluegill, largemouth bass and an underused population of channel catfish. Along with this, an excellent state park with good camping facilities is available.



# tophunch

2006

## northeast

By Bryan Hayes, biologist  
A catch-and-release regulation on smallmouth bass in a four mile segment of the Maquoketa River



Lake McBride

anglers witnessed an incredible increase in numbers and size of smallmouth bass. A string of low reproduction-years in the middle 1990s caused a downturn in the population that a catch-and-release regulation couldn't prevent. The smallmouth bass fishing in this segment is a top hunch for 2006 because of the rebounding numbers witnessed in last fall's fishery survey. Numbers and size are back. Anglers can access this area by small jon-boat, canoe or wading this scenic stretch of river in Delaware County.

## northwest

By Lannie Miller, biologist  
North Twin Lake in Calhoun County has it all. It has great fishing for a variety of fish, including bluegills and crappies up to 10 inches, yellow

starting just below Lake Delhi Dam was implemented almost 20 years ago. The first 10 years of the regulation

bass by the boat load, bullheads weighing more than a pound, walleye in the 2-pound-plus class and unlimited channel cat fishing. Combine this with excellent water clarity and you have the makings of a great outdoor adventure. Shoreline fishing is available but boat anglers will have the advantage.

## southeast

By Paul Sleeper, biologist  
All indications point toward a banner year for panfish at Lake Macbride. If you want to catch lots of bluegill, than Lake Macbride is the place to go. Most bluegills at Macbride will be around 6 to 7 inches and can be caught near the brush piles all year. There is also a strong year class of crappie from 8 to 10 inches. Fish these crappie in shallow brush in the spring and late fall. In the summer months crappie move away from the shorelines and suspend over deeper water. Macbride is a shoreline anglers dream spot with numerous hiking trails that will take you around most of the lake.

## southwest

By Chris Larson, biologist  
Lake Anita in Cass County is a good bet for excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish fishing if the lake fills in the spring. The fish population was renovated in 2003 and additional fish habitat placed in the lake bottom, however fishing has been limited because the lake has been about 3 feet low for two years. If the lake does not fill, a temporary boat ramp will be constructed to improve access.



Maquoketa River

# riverat

2006

## northeast

By Mark Winn, technician

The scenic Wapsipinicon River flowing through northeast Iowa offers diverse fishing opportunities for anglers and should be a top priority for anglers this coming season. Whether after northern pike, walleye, smallmouth bass, channel catfish or an occasional nice creel of crappies, this river offers all types of diverse habitats holding good numbers and sizes of fish. These species, with the exception of walleyes, are all self-sustaining naturally reproducing populations. Accessing fish in the “Wapsi” can be as easy as throwing on a pair of old sneakers and wading in Bremer County, or floating a jonboat in Buchanan County.

## northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist

The Iowa River in Hardin County is one of the most scenic rivers in Iowa and offers some of the best fishing as well. Limestone rock provides rock-rubble substrate throughout the county, which is the preferred habitat for smallmouth bass. Channel catfish and northern pike also inhabit the river and provide self-sustaining

populations. Walleye fingerlings are stocked annually and have produced outstanding fishing in recent

years. Access is excellent with an abundance of public approaches throughout the county. Many anglers prefer to fish by canoe or small jonboat, however much of the stream is wadeable.

## southeast

By Bernie Schonhoff, biologist

What makes the Mississippi River the best place for a fishing adventure no matter what you’re after? DIVERSITY. The Mighty Mississippi has something for everyone. You like catfish? Channel or flathead catfish, and bullheads, the Mississippi has them all. Like your fish with scales? Largemouth and smallmouth bass, the river has them both — just ask the ESPN/BASS

tournament anglers headed there this year. White bass are abundant and they’re willing biters, especially in the tailwaters in the spring. People often associate walleye and sauger with the northern lakes country, but they’re in the river in good numbers. Whether it’s crappies, bluegills or perch, the backwaters have plenty of panfish as well.

## southwest

By Andy Moore, supervisor

Two rivers, the Des Moines in Boone and Polk counties and the Middle Raccoon from Panora to Redfield in Guthrie and Dallas counties, are excellent fishing destinations. The Des Moines can be good for walleye, channel catfish, white bass and hybrid striped bass. Fishing can be good below the various low head dams in the Des Moines area and below the Saylorville and Red Rock dams into Marion County. The Middle Raccoon has very good walleye and smallmouth bass (catch-and-release only) fishing. New habitat has been constructed in the river above the highway P28 access.



Mississippi River



# worthmore than a day 2006

## northeast

By Scott Gritters, biologist  
You can maximize a couple fishing days up the Great River Road along the upper Mississippi River. The road runs along the eastern border of Iowa and connects with our neighboring states. Pick any section of the Great River Road and you can spend a couple quality days along the Mississippi River. This summer however, try concentrating on a trip



Pine Lake

section of the roadtrip has numerous fishing sites, great sightseeing and small river towns that are big on

hospitality. Some must see spots to visit are the Guttenberg aquarium, Guttenberg river walkway, Bussey Lake fishing float, Pikes Peak State Park, Effigy Mounds National Monument, Sny Magill and Bloody Run trout stream.

## northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist  
Upper and Lower Pine lakes, located one-half mile east of Eldora, will provide some of the best bass fishing in northern Iowa. Both of these lakes support bass in the 6- to 7-pound range, with good numbers exceeding 3 pounds. If you prefer panfish, crappie and bluegill are abundant in both lakes. The Iowa River is within a stones throw of the lower lake dam and produces good catches of smallmouth bass, channel catfish and an occasional walleye or pike. Camping is available at Pine Lake State Park on the upper lake

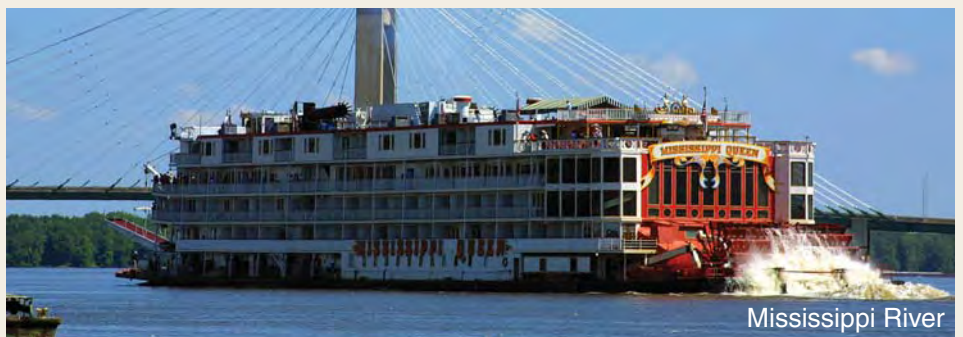
and rental cabins are available on the Iowa River.

## southeast

By Mark Flammang, biologist  
It's one of Iowa's largest lakes and has the fishing quality to match. Year-in and year-out Lake Rathbun (Appanoose County) is recognized across Iowa and the Midwest as one of the great "go to" places for the crappie enthusiast, and 2006 will bring an abundance of 10- to 12-inch crappies. How about spending a day or two more chasing the walleye on Lake Rathbun? The all-time record for walleye harvest at Rathbun was set last year, with great numbers of 15- to 21-inch fish common.

## southwest

By Dick McWilliams, biologist  
The Polk County area offers enough fishing to last more than a day. Gray's, Easter, Big Creek, Blue Heron and Saylorville lakes, with a combined 6,800 acres of water, offer fishing for everything from channel catfish to hybrid striped bass to bluegill. Add the Des Moines River in Polk County into the mix, and excellent fishing with good access is readily available. Good lodging and restaurant accommodations, plus entertainment, make this area very inviting.



Mississippi River

# familyvacation spot 2006

## northeast

By Bryan Hayes, biologist  
Backbone State Park was Iowa's first dedicated state park back in 1920. As it was then, it remains one of the great family vacation spots in Iowa. Activities at the park and in surrounding communities are well worth planning a vacation around. Anglers can take fish from the well-stocked trout stream in the park, which is a popular place on Saturdays throughout the summer when the stocking truck arrives. The kids enjoy seeing the fish released into the stream and then going after 'em. Scenic Backbone Lake can add some variety to the creel. The good largemouth bass fishing from last year will likely carry over to 2006. All the accommodations needed for a memorable family vacation can be found within the park, and the scenery is priceless. Area events of interest include: Strawberry Days, June 9–11, Strawberry Point; Edgewood Rodeo Days, June 22–25, Edgewood; Delaware County Fair, July 10–16, Manchester; and the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Backbone Bluegrass Festival, July 28–30. For more information, visit the Area Chamber of Commerce websites at; [www.strawberrypt.com](http://www.strawberrypt.com) or [www.manchesteriowa.org](http://www.manchesteriowa.org).

## northwest

By Jim Wahl, biologist  
There's something for everyone in the family at Clear Lake. Walleye, yellow bass, channel catfish, bullhead or even a muskie provides the angler plenty of opportunities on this 3,700-acre natural lake. Three public swim beaches are available, as well as water skiing and sailing. If you don't care for water activities, shop the many antique stores in downtown Clear Lake, or spend some time on one of three golf courses. Visitors are treated to special events at City Park nearly every weekend throughout the summer, and the Lady of the Lake tour boat is docked across the street. Several campgrounds and lodging facilities are available on or near the lake.

## southeast

By Mark Flammang, biologist  
Renovated in 1993, Lake Wapello in Davis County provides outstanding angling for bluegill (8- and 9-inch fish are common) and largemouth bass. Largemouth bass are extremely abundant and provide tremendous catch-and-releas-only angling. Camping spots are abundant and the recently renovated cabins provide a quiet and



Backbone State Park



Three Fires Lake

comfortable get away. Don't forget the lodge and restaurant on the lakeshore. Wapello is also a short drive from the historic Bloomfield

## southwest

town square. By Gary Sobotka, biologist  
Three Fires Lake in Taylor County is 80 acres and has great facilities for the family. Besides a new and rapidly growing fish population, there is tent camping and cabins, a swimming beach, playground, and best of all, there is excellent water quality.